

Message Text

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PAGE 01 WELLIN 02931 032146Z

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SUBJ: NEW ZEALAND ELECTIONS

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1. WITH ELECTIONS EIGHT WEEKS AWAY BOTH MAJOR PARTIES ARE WORKING HARDER THAN EVER ON THE HUSTINGS. FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES, OPPOSITION LEADER ROB MULDOON HAS BEEN OUT WOOING THE VOTERS SINCE SHORTLY AFTER TAKING OVER THE NATIONAL PARTY LEADERSHIP IN JULY 1974. HE CONTINUES TO DRAW PACKED HOUSES WHENEVER HE SPEAKS. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT MULDOON IS FIRMLY IN CHARGE OF NATIONAL AND OTHER PARTY LEADERS RARELY SPEAK OUT ON MAJOR ISSUES. WHEN THEY DO, IT CAN BE ASSUMED THAT THEIR PRONOUNCEMENTS HAVE BEEN CLEARED BY MULDOON. IF NATIONAL WINS THE ELECTION, MULDOON CAN BE EXPECTED TO BE A DOMINATING AND OUTSPOKEN PRIME MINISTER.

2. BEING THE GOVERNMENT HAS BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE

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PAGE 02 WELLIN 02931 032146Z

ASPECTS FOR LABOUR. GIVEN THE CABINET RESPONSIBILITIES

OF SENIOR PARTY MEMBERS, THEY ARE NOT AS FREE AS THE OPPOSITION TO GET ON WITH THE JOB OF CAMPAIGNING. AT THE SAME TIME, BEING IN POWER HAS ITS OBVIOUS REWARDS AS INDICATED BY THIS WEEK'S ANNOUNCEMENT CONCERNING STABILIZATION OF PRICES FOR LIVESTOCK. THE ANNOUNCEMENT HAS BEEN WELL RECEIVED IN THE FARMING COMMUNITY AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO DO A FAIR AMOUNT TO COMBAT THE GENERALLY ANTI-LABOUR POSITION OF THE RURAL COMMUNITY. DURING THE NEXT MONTH THE GOVERNMENT IS ALSO EXPECTED TO ANNOUNCE PLANS FOR PENSION REVISIONS IN ORDER TO WIN BACK SOME OF THE OLDER VOTERS WHO ARE ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT NATIONAL'S SUPERANNUATION PLAN (REF B).

3. THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY WILL REMAIN THE DOMINANT ISSUE THROUGHOUT THE ELECTION, WITH LABOUR CLAIMING ITS POLICIES ARE WORKING AND NATIONAL BRADING THE GOVERNMENT'S LARGE-SCALE FOREIGN BORROWING AS ECONOMIC IRRESPONSIBILITY AND PRESSING THE CASE FOR DRASTIC IMPORT REDUCTIONS AND DOMESTIC BELT-TIGHTENING. IN PARTICULAR, BUSINESSMEN HAVE BEEN CONCERNED AT MULDOON'S PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON THE NEED TO CONTROL IMPORTS. BUT MULDOON HAS INDICATED RECENTLY A SLIGHTLY MORE FLEXIBLE APPROACH ON SUCH MEASURES, OBVIOUSLY DESIGNED TO PLACATE BUSINESS. WITH SOME TENTATIVE SIGNS IN AUGUST OF AN IMPROVING BALANCE OF PAYMENTS SITUATION, LABOUR IS BEGINNING TO CLAIM WITH SOMEWHAT GREATER CONFIDENCE THAT ITS ECONOMIC POLICIES ARE PROVING EFFECTIVE.

4. WHILE THE ECONOMY WILL BE THE MAJOR NATIONAL ISSUE, THERE WILL BE A NUMBER OF LESSER ISSUES WITH VARYING DEGREES OF LOCAL IMPACT. THESE INCLUDE SPORTING TIES WITH SOUTH AFRICA, IMMIGRATION, THE USE OF NUCLEAR POWER FOR ELECTRICITY GENERATION, THE MAORI CLAIMS FOR A BETTER DEAL REGARDING TRIBAL LANDS AND WHAT HAS BEEN DESCRIBED IN THE PAST WEEK AS THE "RELATIVE POVERTY" OF MANY NEW ZEALANDERS.

5. IF PAST ELECTION PATTERS CONTINUE, THE SOCIAL CREDIT AND VALUES PARTIES WILL HAVE A MINIMAL INFLUENCE ON THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTIONS. HOWEVER, IT IS TOO EARLY TO JUDGE THIS AND WE WILL BE REPORTING ON DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 WELLIN 02931 032146Z

AREA IN FUTURE CABLE. FAR MORE DIFFICULT TO JUDGE WILL BE THE EFFECT OF NEW VOTERS. THE LOWERING OF THE VOTING AGE TO 18 LAST YEAR HAS RESULTED IN A SIX YEAR COHORT BEING ADDED TO THE ELECTION ROLLS. AS IN OTHER COUNTRIES WHERE THIS HAS HAPPENED, THERE IS A HIGH DEGREE OF INTEREST IN JUST WHERE THE YOUTH VOTE WILL GO. ANOTHER FACTOR CAUSING A GREAT DEAL OF DISCUSSION HAS BEEN THE HEAVY INCREASE IN VOTERS IN A NUMBER OF URBAN ELECTORATES.

WHILE MANY OF THESE PEOPLE ARE YOUNG, FIRST-TIME VOTERS,
A LARGE NUMBER ARE LOWER PAID WORKERS WHO WOULD BE EXPECTED
TO VOTE LABOUR. ROTORUA AND THE WELLINGTON SEAT OF MIRAMAR
ARE TWO ELECTORATES PRESENTLY HELD BY NATIONAL THAT WILL
BE CLOSELY WATCHED ON THIS SCORE.

6. THE EMBASSY WILL BE FOLLOWING CAMPAIGN DEVELOPMENTS
DURING THE NEXT TWO MONTHS AND EXPECTS TO REPORT WEEKLY
ON THEM.
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